1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

ship among the women themselves is, moreover, less developed than in many other African societies.

The isolation and self-sufficiency of the Nyakyusa are diminishing rapidly, for considerable economic and political development followed the 1914–18 war. Coffee (first introduced by the German missionaries) has been developed as a native crop for export, and the cultivation of rice (which had been fostered by the British to provide food for their troops) has expanded. Gold-digging began some fifty miles beyond the borders of the Nyakyusa country, on the Lupa river, and there Nyakyusa men have found both employment as labourers and a ready market for much of their produce, so that by 1936 Rungwe district was exporting goods worth £24,000 annually.[1] In addition to this peasant production there are a small number of European estates producing coffee and tea for export.[2] We estimate the number of Nyakyusa working outside the district as migrant labourers at about 8,000 or 25 per cent of the able-bodied men. There were about 7,000 Nyakyusa men on the Lupa gold-fields in 1937,[3] and a small number on the coffee plantations of Moshi. These are all within a hundred miles of home; and the Lupa labourers return usually after two or three months' work. A considerable number of Nyakyusa are also at work on the sisal plantations of the coast, and employed as domestic servants or in other semi-skilled jobs through Tanganyika, who remain away for periods up to two or three years. Nyakyusa labourers are regarded by European employers as intelligent and capable of heavy work, but lacking in all the subservient virtues.

The system of Indirect Rule was established in 1926, and a consistent attempt has been made to develop a centralized Native Authority for the Rungwe district. The traditionally sovereign chiefs of the Nyakyusa have been grouped in eleven court districts with one chief as president of the Native Court in each (see Map III); these eleven chiefs, together with the two presidents of the Ndali and Lambya courts, belong to a single federation, with an appeal court and joint Native treasury of its own. In the eleven Native Courts (which are courts of record) most of the

[1] Figure estimated on the basis of information supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu.

[2] In 1938 the total area alienated was 26,000 £/£ acs; only 2,500 ac. of this was being worked.

[3] Estimate of the Labour Officer on the 2/£ opn, 4 June 1937.

[Missing in the original – Analyst]

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

£25,500 was earned by Nyakyusa migrant labourers and those employed in the district.[1] Earnings from employment are thus probably about equal to the total earnings from the sale of produce.

Within the district Nyakyusa men are employed in Government service as clerks, hospital orderlies, agricultural inspectors, and as labourers on roads and buildings. They are employed also as house servants by Europeans, as labourers on the twelve European-owned estates in the district, and as shop assistants and servants by Indian traders. There is also a little employment of Nyakyusa by Nyakyusa in agricultural work. Traditionally chiefs, being responsible for hoeing the fields of many wives, sometimes employed poor men to hoe for them, rewarding them after two hoeing seasons with a heifer or bull, but the extent of such employment was, in the old days, small and confined to the chiefs. Nowadays it has been considerably extended, rich men employing others to hoe or, less commonly, to plough for them, and paying them in stock or cash. A few monogamists also employ young boys to assist their wives in fetching wood and water.

Most Nyakyusa men now take paid employment at one time or another. Of a small sample of seventy-nine men, seventy-six (96 per cent) had been in paid employment. There was, however, a marked difference between the work histories of young and old, and between pagan and Christian. Of the pagan men over middle age, the majority of those who worked had not done so willingly, but had been conscripted as carriers, and the total periods for which they had worked were short, averaging under six months per man. On the other hand, all the Christian men over middle age had worked willingly, and the total period for which each had worked averaged over twelve years. Of the young men, all who had worked had done so willingly, but as with the older men, there was a marked difference between the length of time pagans and Christians spent in employment. The profession of Christianity is, amongst the Nyakyusa, correlated with education, and Christian young men, more especially the sons of Christians, tend to secure the skilled or semi-skilled jobs. Those who have skilled work tend to stay longer in a job and return home less frequently because they fear lest they may not find an equally good job again, and because they have often travelled far to find skilled

[1] Based on the estimated number of men in employment, and an analysis of wage rates within and outside the district.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

work. The unskilled can always get a job, and frequent moves make little difference to their pay. In the sample taken 81 per cent of the Christian sons of Christians, 40 per cent of the Christian sons of pagans, and 5 per cent of the pagan sons of pagans had had skilled or semi-skilled jobs. These cases are set out in a table on p. 193. Of twenty-eight individuals who remained over a year at a stretch in employment, twenty were in skilled or semi-skilled jobs, and eighteen had had some schooling.

It was very difficult to get adequate information on the proportion of time that young men spent away, for though the periods they spent at work might be accurately remembered, the periods at home were not easily recorded. Ten young Christians (other than those cited in the sample above), whose work histories were carefully investigated, had spent, on the average, eighteen and a half months, out of the twenty-five months preceding their return home, in employment outside Rungwe district. That is, they had spent less than a quarter of their time at home. They are certainly not typical of the whole district, but they are probably not unrepresentative of the young Christians.

Certain points emerge from this study. Firstly, the time spent away from their homes at work by middle-aged and elderly pagans is negligible. Secondly, the middle-aged Christians have all worked for long periods, but during most of that time they have lived with their families in Christian villages attached to missions in the district; they are not migrants in the sense that their sons are, though they move from one mission village to another following employment. Thirdly, the great bulk of the young men work outside the district at some time, and those in skilled jobs (mostly Christians) tend to stay away for much longer periods than the unskilled. The effects of this are noticed by Nyakyusa themselves, who remarked of Kabembe Christian village that: 'There were few nice houses, for so many of the young men are away at work.' Nevertheless, even in Christian villages, the effects of men's absence is much less marked than it is in Ngonde, where the percentage of absentees is estimated at over half the able-bodied men.[1]

[1] It was estimated in 1934 that the total male labour force of the district was approximately 10,000 and that, of these, 500 were in Southern Rhodesia and the Union, and 5,000 on the Lupa goldfields. (Figures supplied by courtesy of the District Commissioner, Rungwe, from District records.)

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Economic co-operation beyond the village has therefore increased enormously, and this is correlated with a decrease in economic co-operation within the village. The change is most obvious in the case of migrant labourers who, while remaining members of their villages (for they are domiciled there) cease, during the period they are at labour centres, to co-operate with their village neighbours in building, herding, hoeing and hunting; and those of their wives who accompany them are also withdrawn from village activities.

Of the men in paid employment within the district, some, such as house servants, police, hospital orderlies, and clerks attached to the Government station, are very largely withdrawn from economic co-operation in their villages; and even labourers employed on European estates, who still cultivate for themselves, and those who meet essential expenses by growing cash crops on their own account, co-operate less with their village neighbours than was customary in the old days.

As we have seen there is no village co-operation in the production of the main cash crops—rice and coffee—such as there was in the cultivation of three of the main food crops; therefore those who grow cash crops spend a smaller proportion of their time working with their neighbours than their fathers did. Moreover, the cultivation of cash crops encourages the development of hired labour at the expense of work parties attended by neighbours. In effect, the cultivation of cash crops involves less village co-operation than did the traditional cultivation of food crops, and in so far as men's energies are directed into producing cash crops, village co-operation becomes relatively less important.

We argue that while traditionally there was considerable co-operation in production between fellow villagers, that co-operation is diminishing, and its diminution is correlated with employment for wages and the production of crops for sale. The more educated the individual the more time he is likely to spend working outside his village, and the less he co-operates in economic activities with his fellow villagers.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17 Nyakyusa

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5. SUMMARY OF LABOUR HISTORIES

Information from men concerned

Category	No. of Cases	Worked	Average Total Period (those who worked)	Working Life Time as % of Life Time of Adult	Schooling		Skilled and Semi-skilled (of those working)	Place of Work		
					Illiterate	Normal School Educ.		In Tongaland only	Away Outside Tonga	Out of Province
Present Middle-aged and over	10	90%	8 months	90%	100%	0%	10%	10%	–	0%
Ordinary Middle-aged and over	10	100%	22 years, 6 months	80%	80%	0%	20%	80%	–	20%
Present Young	20	80%	1?	17%	60%	0%	0%	20%	80%	80%
Ordinary Sons of pagans, young	11	91%	–	0%	0%	90%	45%	20%	70%	10%
Ordinary Sons of Christians, young	10	100%	–	0%	0%	10%	10%	0%	80%	20%
Total	70	94%	–	30%	30%	13%	45%	30%	50%	17%

[p.193]

[1] Four worked on other relative stations of the Province.

[2] As many of the men are quite young, a record of the total period worked is insignificant. We lack material here on the proportion of time spent at work.

[3] This is not a true random sample for information was solicited haphazard. Therefore, the percentages have no exact significance, but a correlation between Christianity, literacy, skilled work, and long-term employment is suggested.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the case of a Christian who had stayed away from a ritual in his family and 'as soon as he met his relatives he fell sick and coughed like an animal. So they got some of the lees of the beer and gave it to him and he recovered.' A number of Christian kinsmen, leaders in the Church, did not come to the gasping-cough ritual which we attended, but others did come and sipped the beer, or had the lees sent to them at their homes. In the ritual for protection against sorcery which we watched a Christian brother and his wife took part.

And some Christians, though they deny the necessity of many of the pagan rituals for themselves as Christians, still believe them to be necessary to their pagan kinsmen. Hence the anomalous (and to the missionaries the highly unorthodox) position of a woman professing Christianity and acting as officiant in a pagan ritual, as did N. in the death ritual for Kalata's mother (p. 239). N., it will be remembered, came by night. The officiant who performed the ritual for Mwakobela's twins was under instruction as a Christian and was proposing to hand on her medicines to her daughter, a pagan, when she herself was received into the Church. She explained this when Mwakobela (her patient) asked her: 'And what shall we do for twin medicine when you become a Christian?' And we had little doubt that she believed in the efficacy of her medicine for pagans.

Though Christians cannot go through pagan rituals as principals they do not withdraw altogether: they often help their pagan neighbours as grave-diggers at a funeral and in the provision of food for guests at funerals and marriages; and the young men and girls may dance as a separate group, singing their own songs or hymns and ignoring the drums. Sometimes acute rivalry between the two groups of dancers is apparent.

The effect of Christian teaching on pagan ritual is not limited to the partial withdrawal of professing Christians. In those villages most influenced by missions, such as Ilolo, near Rungwe, there is considerable scepticism among pagans, and many of them curtail the rituals in their families, or do not attend them. The Christian view is that 'the pagans see that the Christians disregard the rituals and nothing happens to them, so they begin to ignore them too'. 'Pagans fear much less than they used to do.'

Men who are in European employment either inside or outside the district cannot attend all the rituals. Their case is partially met by keeping the lees of the ritual beer with which to treat them

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

on their return home, but the general effect of modern conditions is that the solidarity of the kinship group expressed in gatherings at rituals is weakened. These changes will be discussed at length in the volume on the communal rituals after the differences between the pagan and Christian conceptions of God have been analysed.

(*c*) *The exchange of gifts*

All the family rituals are occasions for the exchange of gifts which pass primarily between lineages linked by marriage. The exchanges at different rituals are connected, and acceptance of a gift at a marriage may necessitate a return gift at a funeral. Thus the groom gives cattle for his bride at the marriage and at a funeral sons-in-law and fathers-in-law must bring cattle to kill so that they may accompany the deceased, and these are counted among the marriage-cattle given or returned. They may be kept and not killed if there are sufficient cattle to kill otherwise, but they must be offered. The obligation of affines to 'bury one another' by providing cattle for each other's funerals is even mentioned in the marriage negotiations. If a bride is not sent to replace a dead woman, marriage-cattle must be returned by her father, or at least one beast representing 'a mother to draw water for you'. So strong is the feeling that acceptance of a gift implies the obligation to make a return, that cattle offered for a marriage or funeral feast may be refused, on the ground that the family concerned do not wish to commit themselves to returning them. Angombwike described how he sweated and could eat little of a very lavish marriage feast, at which he acted as the groom's 'go-between', for he was wondering how he could make adequate return (cf. p. 253).

The greatest gifts are cattle; but fowls, cloth, beer, curds, bananas, pots, mats, firewood, ointment, cooked food and, nowadays, cash play a subsidiary part. At a funeral affines of the dead man who have no cattle, affines of the 'owner of the funeral', and close friends bring cloths. After the consummation of a marriage, or the inheritance of a widow, the new husband must give his wife a fowl, or meat, or cash representing a fowl, to take to her parents, and when she bears a child he sends another fowl. The wife's people, for their part, bring beer, ointment, firewood, mats, pots, and bananas when they take a bride or young mother back to her husband. There are also three or four exchanges of feasts

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

low, again rising to a perfect fury of rapid sounds, not without a certain rhythm, but with rasping effect upon the nerves of Europeans tossing sleeplessly in the warm humid air.

After harvest comes the house-building; and when that is finished the men are free to go out to seek work. They usually set out in companies, for the Konde dislikes being alone on a journey. Like all home-loving people, they are suspicious of strangers, and if they have to pass through another tribe, they take great care to guard their small possessions; seldom more than they are wearing, and a spear or a club to guard them from the more obvious dangers of the way. There will be a few youths going out for the first time, with a wild flutter at the heart, of fear and expectancy. Fear, for they have heard strange tales of the white men and their ways; expectancy, because of the wonderful things they will see: the great houses, steamers, trains, motors; and what must seem countless white men to those who have been accustomed only to the missionary, the magistrate, and the storekeeper, and even these perhaps some days' journey from home. And who knows but he will come back with money in his pocket, wearing gorgeous raiment, a helmet perhaps, and, above all other things to be desired, a pair of boots! Those who stay long come back with the spoils of civilisation; highly coloured cloths, cheap clocks, melodeons, mouth-organs, worthless pocket-knives, which they deal out to admiring friends and acquaintances.

S:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

all except his own mother, whom he either builds for at a little distance and looks after, or else gives to a half-brother.[1] Inherited wives have the same land rights as others, and a mother for whom a son builds and hoes is trusted by him, in the matter of land, just like a wife.

And a married man often supports an old woman'—a mother, mother-in-law or elder sister—whose husband, though still alive, is incapable of hoeing and who has no unmarried sons. He may either hoe for her on her own husband's land or else assign to her a plot or two of his own.

The gardens of a household are not only worked by its members, other people assist them from time to time. Each married man usually invites a group of his village neighbours to help him with a day's hoeing two or three times a year, entertaining them to food and beer after the work is over. A married woman likewise is often assisted by women friends from neighbouring households in the planting, weeding or reaping of her crops and them she rewards simply with a luxurious meal in the evening, without any beer. Again, as we have seen, a married woman sometimes engages a young man to hoe for her regularly, for a month or more at a time, and pays him by feeding him well for that period.

But although this last custom is still common it is beginning to decline; fewer men each year are willing to work for any length of time except for money, and already in some of the more prosperous households young men are found to be employed in hoeing at the rate of 2/- a month in addition to their food. The young men who thus accept employment in hoeing are always the poor ones, those for whom (whether because their fathers are poor in cattle or because they have many elder brothers before them) the prospect of getting married is too distant to stimulate them to any great diligence at home. In the plain of Mungonde, however, where ploughs are extensively used, the owners of ploughs make a considerable profit by hiring themselves out with their ploughs at 2/- a plot (*ulupaka*).

Kinsmen and affines also often assist in a household's hoeing. When a man inherits his dead father's wealth then he assumes the position of father towards his own younger brothers and is responsible for the marriages of any who are bachelors; they then hoe for him and are fed by his wives just as unmarried sons do. Sons-in-law, again, are expected to bring their friends now and then to help their father-in-law in hoeing and they often do so, more particularly if they are behindhand with the marriage-cattle. After the day's work is over, however, they are entertained just as sumptuously as an ordinary work-party of neighbours.

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[1] And any kinswoman of his mother (sister or niece) whom his father has married is treated likewise.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Further, if a young man's own father is poor in cattle, he will often attach himself to the household of a rich kinsman, a brother of his father or of his mother, and hoe regularly for him. This is far more paying than hiring himself out to a mere neighbour, for he thereby places his rich kinsman *in loco parentis* and eventually gets from him a substantial proportion of his marriage cattle.

6. *INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS IN RELATION TO VILLAGE GROUP AND CHIEF*

Land is not owned in any absolute sense either by the man and his household who live on and cultivate it, or by the village group, or by the chief, but by all of them together. Land tenure among the Nyakyusa is a coherent system of rights in which the chief as overlord, the age-village under the leadership of its great-commoner, the individual male holder, his wives and children all participate. In this the Nyakyusa are in no way peculiar, for "absolute ownership" of land is a fiction nowhere realized; even in Western Europe the use of land is hedged by state and municipal regulations while the security of every owner's tenure is dependent upon political conditions which are not necessarily permanent. Everywhere, whether in civilized or in primitive society, the holding of land is "communal" in the sense that the individual's rights are dependent upon his social relationships, upon his membership of some group with a definite cultural idiom and social organization of its own; everywhere the holding of land is "individual" in the sense that particular people have, at any one moment, definite rights to participate in the use and to share the produce of particular pieces of ground.

There is however at the present time a difference of type between the land-tenure systems of Western Europe and those of the Central African tribes. Rapidly though these latter groups are being integrated with the world-wide organization of modern civilization, the process is not yet complete; and these systems of land-tenure still have some characteristics of the old primitive state wherein small and isolated groups were worlds unto themselves. For in some respects they are still isolated. The Nyakyusa, for example, are 400 miles from the nearest railway and, with the exception of a few small missions and plantations, they remain in occupation of all that traditional tribal land. Now in small and isolated social groups personal relationships necessarily dominate the holding of land for there are few or no impersonal relationships within their society at all. In the land-tenure systems of the vast social organizations of civilized society, on the other hand, impersonal relationship necessarily play an important part, though the precise legal emphasis which is laid

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

tive capital, Tukuyu, and it is still thus used to distinguish this group from others. This group will here be referred to as "*Nyakyusa proper.*" Those in the North of the district to the West and East of Mount Rungwe call themselves *Kukwe* and *Mwamba* respectively, and there is a group of chiefdoms to the East, under the Livingstone Mountains, called *Selya*. All these four groups share a common culture, distinguished by minor local peculiarities of dialect and custom. Immediately bordering the Nyakyusa to the South West are the *Ngonde* (Europeanized as "*Konde*") in Northern Nyasaland; they belong to the same cultural group but are distinguished by greater differences of custom and speech than the others. I have not yet visited them.

In the hills to the West of the Rift live the *Ndali*, who are included in this administrative district; and on the plateau under these hills, to the West of the Kukwe, live the *Penja*. Both these small groups have old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. But they are now rapidly being assimilated to the Nyakyusa both in speech and in law.

I use the name Nyakyusa, in accordance with modern usage, to include the Nyakyusa proper, the Kukwe, Mwamba, and Selya groups, but to exclude the Ndali, the Penja, and the Konde. The Nyakyusa together with the Ndali and Penja number 150,000; the Konde of Nyasaland 30,000.[1]

Members of the Berlin and Moravian Missions were the first Europeans to settle in the district, where they have lived now for forty-five years and have made numerous converts. The German Administrators followed them closely, and later came a few planters. But pronounced economic change is a matter of the past five to ten years during which time the Lupa Gold Fields of South Tanganyika have been opened up and have employed increasing numbers of Africans on the diggings. During the past few years the young men of the Nyakyusa have developed the habit of going for a few months, now and again, to the Gold Fields to earn money for tax and clothes. They seldom stay more than six months at a time, often only one or two; so that their absence does not cause the same difficulties in their own community that are found in other areas where the men spend longer periods away from home.

The Family, together with a sketch of wider Kinship Groupings

The relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling are continually visible in the culture of the Nyakyusa. The

[1] Government Census figures.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

842 595 581 Impotence and barrenness are well known facts, and magic is much used to cure them; but apart from their operation it is believed that each conception directly depends upon the frequency with which a man visits his wife. And thus the bearing of children is, for a woman, a demonstration of her husband's great affection for her. People adduce the number of children that a woman has borne to prove, in conversation, that she is her husband's favourite.

595 Polygyny is the ideal of every pagan Nyakyusa; a plurality of wives is necessary, in this society, for full sexual satisfaction, wives bring a man wealth, prestige and authority, the more wives he has the more children, he thinks, will be born to him.

853 831 It is believed that any contact with the sexual fluids is dangerous to a young child's health, and so, after a woman has borne a child, her husband is supposed wholly to refrain from intercourse with her for about a year, until the child is old enough to play by itself and allow its mother time to wash in the mornings before touching it. Then he may begin to visit her again, but still she must not become pregnant until the child is weaned. "If she does her breasts become rotten" and the first child is harmed. [833 842] As children are not weaned for two or three years, this rule involves the couple in yet another year or more either of coitus interruptus or of infrequent intercourse (which also is believed to avoid conception). [845] These taboos on intercourse after a child's birth are to some extent observed in practice, and are one of the reasons for polygyny among the Nyakyusa.

● 464 595 Another reason is the absence of hired labour. With a few minor exceptions the only way a man can increase the supply of labour at his disposal is by marrying more wives. Polygyny is the mark of a wealthy man, conditioned by his control of cattle, conditioning his supply of food. And the cattle spent in marriage come back again with interest as the polygynist's daughters begin to be betrothed and married.

595 It is extremely common for a man to take as his second or third wife the sister, half-sister, or brother's daughter of his first or second wife. By doing so a man pays a great compliment to the wife whose sister, or niece, he takes and to her family; his action implies complete satisfaction with her and friendship with her family. He sends his wife home "to fetch out (her kinswoman) into the open" (*ukusokola*); but she will not agree to do so unless she approves of him as a husband, and so, if she does agree, her action likewise complements him. I know of one case in which a man wished to take his second wife's younger sister in this way.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

789 778 them first, then his grandfather, and father. Others told us that rain stones always came from Kisi country, a very wet strip of land on the north-east shore of the Lake where the clouds always seem to gather when one looks south from the Nyakyusa valley and plain, and a piece of perforated wood used in Ngonde for making rain came from the hills of Misuku, also a very wet country. Kasitile's stones were of two types, but no direct association of male and female was made. However, the Kukwe spoke of a 'mother' stone having young. 'The rain-maker puts back the stone in the potsherd without water (after rain has come) and going later he finds that it has got young, perhaps seven, with the mother there are eight.'

791 [784] [262] The rain-makers are subject to certain taboos: during the dry season they may not wash lest they drive away the rain nor do they shave for 'they compare hair and clouds saying, "Let it be black", they compare a bald pate with sunshine.' And the rain-maker may not eat roasted maize 'for as the maize crackles in the potsherd when it is roasted, so the thunder will crackle in the sky'. He may not eat green maize (which is reaped during the rains) until the dry weather begins 'because he creates rain, which means he creates all the food which grows with the rain'. If he begins eating too soon he may stop the growth. And when the rain-maker is manipulating his instruments a sex taboo is observed. [834] 'When I am making rain,' said Kasitile, 'I do not sleep with my wives for two days, it's taboo. How would Kyala help us if I did?'

In theory the rain-maker always works under the direction of [643] the political authority—the Kyungu or a chief—but he is also thought to wreak vengeance on those who anger him. Kasitile was critical of his colleague in the hills above Isumba: 'He never makes a nice gentle rain, it always destroys food. . . . He is always demanding things from men, and, if they refuse, he brings his rain to destroy things. . . . There is a very strong wind and heavy rain which takes roofs off houses.' But when Kasitile himself was [464] angry, because his son was taken as a tax defaulter to work on the [687] roads, the weather grew bad.

789 People say I am angry, that this rain is because they came and beat me because of tax. This time the tax collectors came to my place and beat me and when I thought, 'It is not the custom with our forefathers for the tax collectors to come at all to men like me', I grew angry and prayed. . . . When I was in Mulilgunde the country suffered from hunger, all their children were in trouble. . . . Then I came up, and

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER XIII

TWENTY YEARS' CHANGE

How does Christianity interact with other revolutionary forces in the community? It has been possible to observe the changes that have taken place among the Nyakyusa after a lapse of twenty years, and a summary of them is necessary before we proceed to a discussion of the links between religious and secular change.

The first thing that strikes a visitor returning to Nyakyusa country after many years, is that the isolation, which was so typical of the valley, has greatly diminished. Buses, filled with Nyakyusa passengers, cross twice daily the high pass that leads out of the valley, and where once travellers died of exposure and starvation there is a hard road fringed with homesteads and fields. The belt of unoccupied country that even twenty years ago separated the Nyakyusa from their neighbours has disappeared, for they themselves have spilled out of the valley to the north and west, and their Kinga neighbours have come down the Livingstone escarpment to the east and cultivate the mountain slopes, for 'they no longer fear that people (i.e. the Nyakyusa) will seize their property'. Men travel abroad to find work and they go much further and stay away longer than before. In the remotest village there is some man who has visited Burma or Malaya as a soldier, and a dozen lads who will argue the relative merits of the Orange Free State gold mines and the Copper-belt as centres of employment. Many women now accompany their husbands to Rhodesia, or other parts of Tanganyika, and some travel to visit daughters or sisters. The older women enlarge on their journeys and joke about how fearful they used to be.

Travel implies learning another language, most often Swahili, but also Bemba and English and the pidgin of the gold and copper mines called Fanakalo. Thus intellectual isolation is disappearing along with the physical isolation. The numerous 'bush schools' which existed in the Nyakyusa valley in 1938, and at which many of those who attended never even learnt to read and write, have been largely replaced by mission primary schools, state-aided and improved, and in these and the Native Authority primary and middle schools there are now 8,417 pupils, as against about 500

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Plains than from any other Nyakyusa area. In the high-density regions, the proportion of young men away at any one time is about 50 per cent. on the average and the proportion has risen concomitantly with the increasing scarcity of land.

It is not, of course, suggested that land shortage is the only factor responsible for contemporary labour migration amongst the Nyakyusa. Elsewhere (*loc. cit.*) I have drawn attention to the very high wages, the increased opportunity to obtain outside employment, the development of transport services and the intensification of recruiting, together with the general desire of the people to gain a higher standard of living as they more thoroughly embrace the new money economy. In fact, wage-labour in the mines is more profitable than growing paddy at home under current agricultural practice, even were land more easily available. Nevertheless, more young men do leave their homes in the Lake Plains than elsewhere in the country, and there is a rough correlation between land availability and the degree of labour migration, which seems to indicate that where men can obtain more land they tend to seek their money incomes at home. The Nyakyusa themselves, with an intensity of tribal patriotism, say that they much prefer to remain at home if they can earn their money there, even if they earn rather less than they might obtain abroad; but, say the young men, it is impossible to earn anything like sufficient when the fields are unobtainable in which to cultivate the cash-crop.

The data which I have been able to collect are summarised in Table VII. Young men are defined here as those under about 30 years old.

TABLE VII

YOUNG MEN: LAND HOLDING AND LABOUR MIGRATION

Village and chiefdom	Young men having own paddy field	Young men away at work	Average holding of: Young men who own land	Other men in same village
1. Very high density region				
Myenga: Mwakipesile	17%	59%	0.5 acres	1.9 acres
Kapugi: Kaswa	21%	36%	0.75 acres	1.3 acres
Nkukwe: Mwakyusa	38%	31%	—	—
2. High density region				
Ibaba: Mwakyusa	33%	47%	1.6 acres	3.7 acres
Kapugi: Mwaswanganda	91%	36%	1.25 acres	4.3 acres

There are some young men who have small food-crop plots but no paddy field, but I have chosen to correlate labour migration with paddy cultivation because these are almost the only alternative ways of earning money today, and the people themselves recognise the fact. The number of samples is too small, but the general inference seems to be quite clear nonetheless. My own conclusions in this matter were, however, arrived at independently of these figures, which were only obtained for corroboration. The evidence of the people themselves and their obvious difficulties of earning money at home were overwhelming.

If anything is required to underline the current land shortage and to illustrate the small size of the average holding, it surely lies in the existence of villages in which only about one quarter of the young men have their own paddy fields, and in which the average holding of this minority amounts to less than an acre.

Only in the low-density region can the young men obtain the fields they require. There, as they did traditionally, the young adult sons continue to assist their fathers in the heavier labour in the fields, but gradually before marriage they accumulate and extend their own holdings and so achieve economic independence. Elsewhere in the Lake Plains this process is taking much longer and indeed it now very frequently awaits inheritance at the death

10:Culliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FNI? Ngonde FNI?
Nyakyusa

flood plains paddy fields where the ox-plough is in general use today. The general advantages of consolidation require no exposition here.

In view of the domestic, economic and social importance of cattle to the Nyakyusa and their potential value in a mixed intensive economy, and also in view of the fact that cattle are widely held in very small numbers by individual families, it is suggested that further and more urgent attempts be made to encourage stall-feeding, especially during the wet season. It is realized that past efforts in this matter have failed, and therefore a thoroughgoing scheme of propaganda and demonstration work is needed. Small fodder crops might be grown in the dry season and there is always plenty of banana fodder as makeweight.

The problem of the landless young men is likely to remain very difficult (see pages 36ff). It has to be remembered of course, that as they get older men do acquire land gradually. Nevertheless the proportion of landless, or virtually landless, men is high and is apparently increasing. The large-scale, post-war labour migration to the Rhodesias and South Africa is undoubtedly one of the more important results of land shortage and economic difficulty, and it is a valuable safety valve. As I have written elsewhere: "The serious and increasing land shortage amongst the Nyakyusa raises real doubts if there is any policy at all which can keep the men at home when there is not enough land for them – for the sake of both economic and general social stability it might be preferable in the long run if the continued pressure on the land resources were released by a degree of permanent emigration."[1] Since writing that and during the course of my land investigations I have only become more convinced of its rightness. I would now go so far as to say that Nyakyusa men should be encouraged to go abroad to work and even to become permanent wage-labourers in the industries and areas which demand labour and offer a higher standard of living. If the Nyakyusa are not to be seriously retarded in their home economic development, based as it must be on agriculture (i.e. on the land), the excess population must find an outlet elsewhere.

The general tendency towards greatly increased exclusiveness in the Nyakyusa village, involving renewed emphasis on the principle of land-holding only by residence and the forfeiture of a holding when changing residence, raises wider issues the future significance of which is not easily seen, especially by the Nyakyusa themselves. This narrow village parochialism does little to meet the increasingly difficult problem of land shortage, whilst the isolation it fosters is the antithesis of the wider outlook required by a developing society in a world money economy. I am fully aware of the strong native sentiment attached to the village and to village independence, but this was in fact diminishing in earlier European times before the new land scarcity set in (see pages 29-30). I do not think that this village system and the complex of attitudes and values it fosters is adequate to provide for the future – a future which the Nyakyusa do not yet clearly foresee. With some deference, therefore, I offer the following suggestion: a man who already has a holding should be able to retain it when he moves to live in another village. If his new home is too far away for the continued cultivation of all or part of the holding, or for any other valid reason, he should be able to sell or give it to anyone he wishes. Such gift or sale could be supervised by the headman of the village in which the holding lies. It might well, at first at any rate, be limited to a member of the same village, either an established villager or another man who is willing to come and live there. I think it important that disposal should be outright and not on leasehold terms, for the latter would most probably engender further complications and uncertainty of tenure, which must be avoided.

1. Culliver, P. G.: A Report on the Migration of African Workers to the South from the Southern Highlands Province, with special reference to the Problems of Rungwe District. Provincial Administration, Tukuyu (Mss), 1954, page 4.21.

north. Before the war, the goldfields gave work to about 15,000 natives, chiefly Wanyakyusa, and most of the foodstuffs from this district went there. The goldfields are gradually closing due to difficulties in obtaining spares, and it has been necessary to look for outlets for Tukuyu produce elsewhere. Should the goldfields open again after the war, and large-scale mining start, there is a great future for produce grown in Tukuyu.

The main income of the tribe is derived from agricultural, military, mining and public works sources, and it is estimated that in 1941 the average annual income per man, woman and child was about Sh. 30 per year. It has risen considerably since, as over 4,000 men have joined the military and a large part of their salaries comes back to the district in the form of remittances. The agricultural source, from which a larger part of the tribal income accrues, is from sales of rice, maize and other foodstuffs. A fair number of Wanyakyusa also work on the tea plantations.

The picture sketched above will show that the district is inhabited by a tribe whose agriculture is of great interest, since the variety of crops, from wheat in the highlands to paddy and cotton on the lake shore, is perhaps unrivalled in so small an area elsewhere in East Africa. It has not been possible to fill in the picture with details of the people's character, but it is worth mentioning that the Wanyakyusa are a people difficult to administer, argumentative, litigious, self-willed and at times inclined to truculence. Nevertheless their intelligence is such that they are willing to be persuaded, and, once convinced of the benefit of any change, adopt it with energy. This is instanced by the way they have in a few years accepted the principles of anti-erosion to such an extent that now there is perhaps 90 per cent control in the well-populated areas. It should, however, be stressed that, though the soil is not being eroded to any great extent, it is still being impoverished, since increased cultivation for the war effort has involved breaking a great deal of new land with a consequent lessening of fallow. Overcropping in the hilly country is very great and, in order to prevent further emigration, it behoves the native planters to learn to put something back into the soil in the form of mulch or compost. If care is not taken, a comparatively prosperous country will one day become like so many parts of Africa, where a losing struggle is fought with Nature to obtain a sufficiency for the people's needs.

(as 21st September, 1942)